

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 202421 TOSEC 100143

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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S/S - MR. ORTIZ

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

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S E C R E T STATE 202421 TOSEC 100143

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, BA

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN CABINET RESIGNS

S/S PASS ATHERTON

1. PRIME MINISTER KHALIFA OF BAHRAIN AND HIS CABINET RESIGNED ON AUGUST 24 ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE CABINET WAS UNABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS FUNCTIONS IN THE FACE OF UNCOOPERATIVE AND ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES BY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE RESIGNATION FOLLOWED CLOSELY ON THE HEELS OF A WIDE SCALE ROUND-UP OF A NUMBER OF LEFTIST MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT AND PEOPLES' FRONT. THE RULER HAS SINCE ISSUED A DECREE TO THE PRIME MINISTER (WHO IS HIS BROTHER) INSTRUCTING HIM TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT AND TO SUGGEST AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION TO REMOVE "FLAWS AND GAPS".

2. WE SEE THIS POLITICAL MINUET AS A PRELUDE BY BAHRAIN'S LEADERSHIP TO PREVENT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FROM EXERCISING GREATER POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY'S POLICIES. BAHRAIN HAS BEEN A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY SINCE DECEMBER 1973 BUT ONE FOURTH OF ITS POPULARLY ELECTED

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PAGE 02 STATE 202421 TOSEC 100143

MEMBERS ARE RADICAL LEFTISTS AND THIS GROUP HAS STYMIED

ASSEMBLY SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT ON KEY SECURITY

ISSUES. THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT THE ASSEMBLY EITHER WILL BE DISSOLVED, WITH NEW ELECTIONS FOLLOWING AFTER A PERIOD OF TIME, OR ITS RECONVENING POSTPONED WHILE ARRESTS CONTINUE.

3. THE NEW CABINET IS LIKELY TO BE STRONGER BUT SHOULD NOT DIFFER FROM THE PREVIOUS CABINET'S BASIC POLICIES. REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE NEW GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO ADHERE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT LETTER NOTIFYING US OF ITS DECISION TO TERMINATE MIDEASTFOR BY JUNE 1977. WE BELIEVE THAT BAHRAINI LEADERSHIP HAD EARLIER COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IT COULD NOT PROCEED WITH THE CRACKDOWN AGAINST THE LEFTISTS WITH THE FUTURE OF MIDEASTFOR UNRESOLVED, WHICH EXPLAINS WHY IT WAS IN A RUSH TO DELIVER A LETTER NOTIFYING US OF ITS INTENTION TO TERMINATE THE NAVY'S PRESENCE AND THUS REMOVE THIS ISSUE FROM DOMESTIC POLITICS. INGERSOLL

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